

'Dark cloud is lifted'

Reports by RUSIATE MATAIKA

THE newly-installed Roko Tui Bau, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, has renewed his commitment and those of his people to the Vunivalu.

Ratu Joni, 38, made the undertaking for the highest chiefly title in the land while accepting the *kamunaga* or *tabua* (whale's tooth) presented by his people — the members of the extended Vusaratu clan at his installation on Saturday on Bau Island.

The *kamunaga* was presented by the Roko Tui Viwa, Ratu Savenaca Draunibaka Komaisavai who said that the people of Vusaratu had been "covered by a dark cloud" for a long time since the death of the last Roko Tui Bau.

The late Doctor Ratu Jione Antonio Rabici Doviverata, Ratu Joni's father, died in 1971, when Ratu Joni was studying at Suva Grammar School.

Ratu Draunibaka called on Ratu Joni to restore unity among his people, and dedicated land and resources which come under the rule of the Roko Tui Bau.

He said that the right and better way for leading the people of Vusaratu would be drawn from God's guidance and strength.

The sealing of the installation was the presentation of the *bilo* of *yaqona* by the newly-installed Ratu Mai Moturiki, Ratu Alifereti Draunidalo.

Ratu Alifereti was installed by the people of Moturiki at the village of Nasesara the previous Saturday to allow him to officially present the ceremonial cup of *yaqona* at Bau.

Addressing an audience of elders from the Vusaratu clan and men and women of noble birth at the Vatanitawake, Ratu Joni appealed for unity at Mataiwelagi — the residence of the Vunivalu.

He urged the Mataiwelagi family to unite for the good of Bau, the confederacy of Kubuna and Fiji as a whole.

Ratu Joni, who is also the Permanent Arbitrator, was referring to a rift which exists between the two sets of children from two marriages of the late Vunivalu, Ratu Sir George Cakobau.

The rift became more obvious two days before the installation as the Vunivalu's children from the second marriage to Lady Seruwaia Lelea tried unsuccessfully to stop the installation.

Lady Lelea and her children were not present at the installation.

According to protocol, Ratu Joni is now kingmaker of the Vunivalu title which has been vacant since the death of Ratu Sir George in 1989.

When the hour-long ceremonies were over, Ratu Joni was embraced by Adi Samanunu Cakobau Talakuli, the eldest daughter of the Vunivalu from his first marriage to Adi Veniana Gavoka, of Namata.

Adi Samanunu witnessed the entire proceedings in the Vatanitawake.

Another significant event which was part of the ceremonies but not known to many was the ascension to the title of Masau by Ratu Josua Toganivalu.

Saturday's installation also incorporated Ratu Josua's investiture as Ratu Joni's traditional spokesman.

For the Masau clan, the events of Saturday were very moving as Ratu Josua is the lone survivor in a family of men who have led illustrious careers in politics, Government and traditional leadership on Bau.

The presentation of gifts and entertainment for the newly-installed chief was held on the island *rara* after the formal installation at the Vatanitawake.

About 3000 people were treated to a big feast.

Dancing to a live band followed until dusk.

Visitors to the island who stayed back for the dedication service at Ratu Cakobau Church yesterday were entertained around the *tanoa* until the wee hours of the morning.



ADI Samanunu Cakobau Talakuli watches the ceremonies of installation at Vatanitawake on Saturday. On the far right is the Gonesau and Ra MP, Doctor Ratu Wilisoni Tuiketei Malani, from Nakorotubu, Ra.



WARRIORS escort Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi to the village green on Bau Island where he was entertained after his installation during a solemn ceremony. Behind him is his spokesman, the Masau, Ratu Josua Toganivalu. Picture: YAD SINGH

Installation paves way for selection of Vunivalu

THE support for the installation of the Roko Tui Bau by the children of the late Vunivalu from his first marriage favours their ascension to the title.

The title has been vacant since the death of Ratu Sir George Cakobau in 1989.

The installation on Saturday heralded the next major event on Bau — the installation of the Vunivalu — which will be presided over by the Roko Tui Bau.

The last Roko Tui Bau, Doctor Ratu Jione Antonio Rabici Doviverata, presented the ceremonial cup to seal the ascension of the title for the late Ratu Sir George.

On Friday night, Adi Samanunu's younger sister and brother — Adi Litia Cakobau and Ratu George Kadavulevu — led a big delegation to Bau where they presented gifts of chosen mats, three large pigs and hundreds of bundles of dalo.

They were backed by the *qase ni vale* from various parts of Tailevu — Kaba, Nayavu, Tubalevu, and nearby Ovea and Vatoa — people, who according to traditional protocol provide for the chiefs in such ceremonies.

Their presence allayed fears among the Vusaratu clan who thought that publicity of opposition to the installation would deter the members of the Mataiwelagi family from supporting the occasion.

While Ratu George drank *yaqona* and talked to his elders at Naua, the home of new Tailevu MP Ratu Manasa Seniloli, his two elder sisters joined the celebration on the village *rara*.

Adi Litia, accompanied by women of the *matagali* Tui Kaba, was one of the first to take to the floor as the Fiji Military Forces band struck up some lively numbers.

Their half brother, Ratu Epenisa, had challenged the installation on Saturday.

He had said that his family did not support the installation of Ratu Joni because there were no direct descendants to the title from the original title holders.

Ratu Epenisa was not seen at the official ceremonies and the revelry but was reportedly on the island during the ceremonies.

Ratu Epenisa, Adi Litia Kaunilotuma, Ratu Josefa Celua and Ratu Tanoa Visawaqa are children from Ratu Sir George's second marriage to Lady Seruwaia Lelea.

Ratu Joni stressed on Saturday that he had a commitment to support and uphold the Cakobau household.

Adi Samanunu who witnessed proceedings at the Vatanitawake was the first to congratulate and embrace Ratu Joni.